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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 OUAGADOUGOU 000395

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SUBJECT: BURKINA FASO: LOCAL NGO REPORT SAYS CORRUPTION ON THE RISE

REF: A) OUAGADOUGOU 20; B) OUAGADOUGOU 263

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#### 1. Key Points:

-- NGO RENLAC's recently released anti-corruption report criticized the GOBF's lack of political will to address corruption, which it believes is worsening.

-- Burkina Faso's ranking in Transparency International's (TI) 2007 Corruption Perception Index also suggest a worsening problem: Burkina Faso's rankings tumbled from 10th in Africa and 79th worldwide in 2006, to 17th in Africa and 105th worldwide in 2007.

-- RENLAC commended the government's recent establishment of a new anti-corruption entity, the Superior Authority of State Control (ASCE), but questioned the ASCE's independence and effectiveness because it depends heavily on the prime ministry and lacks subpoena and prosecutorial powers (ref A).

#### 2. Key Judgment:

-- The issue of corruption has taken on an even greater importance in the public's mind in light of recent protests against the rising cost of living (ref B). Many Burkinabe increasingly see a stark contrast between their difficult economic situations, and high-level officials enriching themselves through corruption.

-- Since RENLAC is TI's country partner for Burkina Faso, and since RENLAC's recent, 2008 report asserts a worsening of corruption here, we expect that Burkina Faso's TI rankings for 2008 could fall even further. This might occur despite Prime Minister Tertius Zongo's deep, personal engagement on this issue, including his work with the Council of Ministers, National Assembly, and well received outreach to the donor community (septel).

End Key Points and Key Judgments.

Corruption: Where it is Concentrated

3. NGO RENLAC's recently released anti-corruption report criticized the Government of Burkina Faso's (GOBF) lack of political will to address corruption, which it believes is worsening. RENLAC's report was based on a survey covering 16 social and economic sectors in the country's 13 regions. According to the report, around 95 percent of 1700 respondents agreed that corruption had increased nationwide. The most corrupt cities were thought to be Ouagadougou (99 percent agreed), and Bobo-Dioulasso (97 percent agreed), the country's second biggest city. Meanwhile, the most corrupt social and economic sectors were, in descending order: customs service, tax-collecting agencies, justice and health ministries, municipal police, municipalities, national police, and government contracts/open bidding processes.

¶4. If corruption here is indeed worsening in 2008, it would represent the continuation of a trend from 2007: Burkina Faso's ranking in the TI Corruption Perception Index tumbled from 10th in Africa and 79th worldwide in 2006, to 17th in Africa and 105th worldwide in 2007.

#### Corruption in the Politics

¶5. Corruption on the political front also remains a problem according to 85.5 percent of respondents, who believed that Burkinabe political parties were actively implicated in corruption. RENLAC found that instead of basing their political support on candidates' political agenda, voters selected the candidate who had the resources necessary to participate in corruption.

#### Enablers of Corruption: Ignorance and Impunity

¶6. RENLAC findings indicate that the population's poverty, illiteracy, and ignorance of civic duty have fostered corruption in Burkina Faso. The Burkinabe Movement for Human Rights (MBHP), a local NGO, and the largest most vocal organization working to fight corruption in Burkina Faso, added that the impunity of both corruptors and corrupt individuals enabled corruption to flourish.

#### Key Anti Corruption Recommendations for Burkina Faso

¶7. To effectively address corruption in Burkina Faso, RENLAC's report recommended that the GOBF:

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- Ensure effective independence of the ASCE with subpoena and prosecution authority, involve the Parliament in ASCE the fight against corruption, and publicize annual reports from the ASCE and other state institutions working on the issue of corruption;
- Ensure free and fair elections through such measures as limiting expenses associated with political campaigns, allowing public access to campaign budgets, and outlawing payment for media coverage in the months before public polling;
- Encourage public and media participation and awareness about corruption and its consequences through such means as information campaigns.

JACKSON